

Gore, C. (1984) *Regions in Questions : Space, Development Theory and Regional Policy*. Methuen, London/New York, 290 p.

John Bradbury

Volume 30, numéro 79, 1986

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/021776ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/021776ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Département de géographie de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0007-9766 (imprimé)

1708-8968 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Bradbury, J. (1986). Compte rendu de [Gore, C. (1984) *Regions in Questions : Space, Development Theory and Regional Policy*. Methuen, London/New York, 290 p.] *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 30(79), 89–91.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/021776ar>

traditionnelles. De plus en plus repliés chacun dans leur milieu, isolés, les ODC voient leur avenir plus que jamais remis en question.

Comme nous le voyons, l'ouvrage d'Alain G. Gagnon ravive nombre de questions entourant la problématique régionale au Québec. Il permet en outre, pour le lecteur peu familier avec la région, d'avoir un portrait d'ensemble situant concrètement le rôle et la position des forces politiques sur le terrain. Sans être nouveau, il apporte certes un éclairage sur l'action de l'État et celle du mouvement populaire de l'arrière-pays bas-laurentien et gaspésien et contribue de ce fait à la réflexion amorcée depuis bientôt dix ans sur la question régionale dans l'Est du Québec.

Ginette CARRÉ
Rimouski

GORE, C. (1984) *Regions in Question: Space, Development Theory and Regional Policy*. Methuen, London/New York, 290 p.

This is an ambitious book which attempts to portray the wide range of theory and practices which have evolved over the last 30 years in development theory and regional policy. This in itself is a large interdisciplinary task for a single 290 page text; the author then adds a further component that of the misconception of geographic space which he weaves into the fabric of planning theory. The result is a very useful text which is indicative of Gore's synthetic skills. He notes that there have been a number of significant trends and events since 1950 and the reader is shown how and where these fit together and where they differ and fail in their purpose. The book is divided into a short introduction and three substantive parts: Introduction — Getting into space; part I — Common Regional Policy Objectives; part II — Rival Regional Planning Strategies; part III — The Poverty of the Spatial Separatist Theme.

Gore's objective is to settle some of the issues and debates of development theory and regional policy by tracing their roots in the literature. The main issues here are related to the relevance of similar path models deployed in the developed and the developing worlds. His first argument is that much of the theory which was developed in the period 1950-1980 (circa) was neither an accurate representation of processes nor a useful tool in planning; he therefore seeks to negate the validity of these theories. In one sense he undermines the (false ?) basis of regional planning in developing countries by pointing out that the claim of regional planning to rest on a "hard science" of "spatial relationships" has no defensible foundation. But on the other hand, while in the end he points toward the beginnings of an alternative explanation, there is no apparent reconciliation of the type of planning which could be successfully deployed.

The introduction points out that while "space" is an important part of regional planning and theory it is a much maligned and fetishized concept. Working through the lens of "space", "time distance", "spatial organization", "spatial science" as these evolved in the post-1950 period meant that a number of crucial social, political and economic elements of human agency were avoided. Much of his "spatial structure", "spatial system", "locational science" and "spatial separatist" literature became frozen into a "scientific" cul-de-sac which while it allowed for some satisfactory descriptive work only showed a limited capacity for the analysis of holistic forces responsible for creating and shaping the dynamics of human landscape.

Gore argues that we have used the common core of "geographic space" over a 30 year period to both extinguish and misinterpret a clearer understanding of how regions develop and how "human agency" has evolved. Through a profusion of adjectives — social space, economic space, personal space, topological space, physical space, perceptual space, absolute space, relational space and relative space — geographers and other spatial folk have grappled with a phenomena which has defied proper analysis and bilitled their attempts to arrive at a synthesis of "human agency". We are left with a numbing question — "what do these adjectives really mean"?

Part one discusses the basis of common regional policy objectives through the work of Ohlin, Lösch, Pareto, *et al.* Gore argues that, while they laid down the basis of their own scientific approach, through the projection of market forces as the tool of spatial equilibrium, in the end this led to a fundamental misunderstanding of the meaning of "space". Myrdal, Friedman and Rostow come in for the same assessment. Their attempts to shape a spatial equilibrium model is neither desirable nor attainable and thus, according to Gore, it is irrelevant as a norm for diagnosing problems and building solutions (p. 44). This theme reappears throughout the book.

In part two Gore presents the core of a Rival regional planning strategy including the various interpretations of the growth pole school and the diffusion of modernization genre. The basis of these theories leads to the division of the landscape fabric into a modern ("capitalist", "industrial", "urban") sector which is claimed to be dynamic; and, a "traditional" ("non-capitalist", "agricultural", "rural") sector which is said to be stagnant. It is argued that the promotion of a "modern" urban-industrial growth within a region can have major positive spread effects on the traditional rural areas. Herein lies the fallacy of their arguments and the bankruptcy of the policy orientations which flow from the logic of the theory — and it is against this cul-de-sac that Gore poses the anti-theses in the second half of the book.

Not all theorists of course fall into the spatial trap — a number of carefully devised studies, based on both historical and current projects, have pointed out the problems in modernization theory and the "corrective" policies which have been deployed around the globe. One problem in this general area, not adequately discussed by Gore, is that the inverse of the analytical thrust and its theory does not necessarily lead to a satisfactory planning policy — especially as cases vary and more particularly if the cultural and social forces which have shaped the landscape over time have been fundamentally misunderstood.

Gore argues that there are a number of alternative threads which can be used to reconstitute the social and economic fabric of human landscapes. He notes the work of Gunder Frank, Slater and Santos as being useful tools to understand both global and regional development. Similarly he poses a group of neo-populists (grassroots) (Johnson, 1970) who promote local developments on the basis of earlier growth pole principles. A more critical analysis of these neo-populists would perhaps have revealed them in a similar light as modernization theorists and the national regional planners(?)

However, Gore does present a more critical assessment of these themes in the chapter criticising the "spatial separatist" theme. Here he argues that, contrary to the theory, it is impossible to identify, separate and evaluate "the spatial" either as an independent phenomenon or property of events examined through spatial analysis (p. 176). Much of this chapter picks up on and enlarges his earlier framework criticizing the spatial theme and the notion of separateness of space. The reader is left unclear, however, as to whether we must remove all the Emperor's old clothes or whether a new suit awaits him!

Having disposed of a number of heretic models Gore then leads his readers to the final chapter — presumably to reveal the Emperor's new clothes. The chapter is entitled "The State, Development and Planning Practice". He bases this section on the theory of the state taken from Miliband and Poulantzas. The literature in this field is rich and well constructed but there are numerous different positions within both liberal and Marxist schools — far more in fact than Gore has presented in the book. His emphasis is on the literature on state power and territory as an integral part of state theory. The term "territory" here connotes geographic space and power (can we detect the phoenix of earlier models of geography and the state of the German school?).

If Gore had emphasized the political basis of differential alienation of power, resources, capital and services then a more realistic understanding of the biases of distributive mechanisms in space and regions might have been obtained in this part of the book. In this way we may eventually escape from the artificial emphasis on spatial separateness towards a "human agency" analyses of the "how" and "why" of differential location and distribution. Even then, however, we will still be faced with finding a policy solution to a problem which may not always respond to the "directives" generated from the inverse of a problem itself. Regional practice is inherently biased no matter if we use liberal or Marxist elements of analysis and distribution.

However with respect to the planning profession *per se* there are numerous variations and themes at the grassroots and the bureaucratic level which are not adequately represented by Gore and could have entered into his discussion of the role of the state in this chapter.

The final chapter is not really a conclusion despite its title; in fact the book really needs a stronger (additional) conclusion. Instead Gore comes to the point of simply introducing a new stable of authors including Harvey (1982), Giddens (1977, 1981), Castells (1977), Sack (1980), Massey (1984) and Massey and Meggan (1979, 1982). This is a burgeoning literature but much of its discussion here appears almost as an afterthought in a section entitled "Guide to Further Reading". Obviously the task of setting this new literature in context and of integrating it into a planning framework has still to be done.

This is a very useful text despite the lack of integration of the most recent literature in the field. For someone like this reviewer who has been teaching this subject to undergraduates for several years the book is an obvious boon. Indeed I can recommend it highly for senior undergraduate and graduate reading. It is not a book which contains new theory — it is a literature review which offers a comprehensive survey and thematic critique. And despite the author's claim to negate much of the validity of neo-classical and the related balance/unbalance theory Gore gives a fair and accurate portrayal of what this literature represents. But obviously one cannot expect new policy orientations from this book or from the new field in the final chapter, largely because it is too late for the "spatial separatist" genre and too early for the "political economy" school to have any long term "spread" effects.

John BRADBURY
Department of Geography
McGill University

COLLECTIF (1983) *Les régions culturelles*. Québec, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, Questions de culture n° 5, 182 p.

Cet ouvrage est le cinquième cahier thématique à paraître dans la série « Questions de culture » de l'Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture (IQRC). Comme les quatre précédents recueils, celui-ci regroupe des articles fort stimulants qui s'adressent également et indifféremment à tous les chercheurs en sciences humaines et sociales, y compris les géographes. Pour ceux et celles dont le principal champ d'intérêt et de recherche est le Québec, ce cahier sert aussi à confirmer, une fois de plus, le rôle important de l'IQRC et la pertinence de son mandat gouvernemental qui « consiste à effectuer, à encourager et à soutenir des recherches et des études sur les divers aspects des phénomènes culturels, en vue de contribuer au développement culturel du Québec ».

Il est nécessaire de signaler, par ailleurs, que six des sept textes réunis ici ont d'abord fait l'objet de communications dans le cadre d'un atelier de travail présidé par l'IQRC en mars 1982. Axé sur les changements culturels en milieux rural et urbain au Québec durant la période qui s'étend de 1800 à 1930, cet atelier « permettait de rendre compte des nouvelles orientations de la recherche dans le secteur de l'histoire socio-culturelle » (p. 12). D'après Y. Lamonde, le seul collaborateur formellement rattaché à l'IQRC, l'atelier « se voulait aussi l'occasion d'échanges sur des pistes de recherche considérées comme particulièrement décisives et susceptibles de contribuer aux orientations de l'Institut » (*Ibid.*).

Ce contexte de base nous aide à comprendre pourquoi le recueil compte pas moins de trois bilans critiques de la littérature socio-culturelle québécoise. Il importe d'ajouter, cependant, que ces trois articles ne sont nullement redondants. En effet, chacun aborde un sujet et des phénomènes distincts. Par exemple, P.-L. Lapointe et G. Laperrière analysent à fond les multiples écrits, populaires et scientifiques, portant sur l'évolution géo-historique de leurs